



NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
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OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

September 28, 1966

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford Medical Center
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

My recollection is that I asked my staff to send you copies of certain material soon after receipt of your letter and had expected to follow this up with my own views. Unfortunately, there is no record of material being sent so I can only assume that it was not.

In the intervening period, we have been negotiating a memorandum of understanding with George Washington University which has now been signed and establishes the George Washington University Program of Policy Studies in Science and Technology. Part of my procrastination was to find out whether this memorandum of understanding could be achieved based on a meeting of the minds rather than a superficial common desire to get something done in this field. I am convinced that it represents a very real determination on the part of the University to undertake this project. Further, in discussions with General Bernard Schriever, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), he has agreed to serve as vice chairman of the steering committee, which, as you will note, is to be chaired by the President of the University. General Schriever will also allocate a part of his time, over and above his service on the steering committee, to assist in this project. He will have an office with Vice President Mayo, and several others knowledgeable in broad governmental policy requirements as well as systems management will also participate. It is my hope that we can have also the quite intimate association of a very senior Foreign Service officer with thorough knowledge of the US/USSR range of problems.

Leading up to the signing of the memorandum of understanding with George Washington University has been a series of developing ideas which I believe are best represented by my letter to Dr. Goldsen, of the Rand Corporation, dated December 8, 1965, and his reply dated December 28, 1965. You will note that I have made a few notations on pages 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12. I would be most interested in your reaction to this correspondence.

Also enclosed is a letter to Alan Waterman, dated January 11, 1966, with his reply of January 22, and a subsequent letter dated May 18. We are now considering the establishment of some forum, such as a seminar, in which these ideas can be further discussed.

In the speech which Walter Heller made on February 23 commemorating the Twentieth Anniversary of the Employment Act of 1946, I was struck by his use of the term "fiscal dynamics" and began to ponder how the processes of our governmental institutions--executive, legislative, and judicial--could work within a system requiring reaction to dynamic stimuli and also requiring an administrative structure with a built-in dynamic stability or dynamic equilibrium which would minimize the requirement for hierarchical decision-making, or at least require the most important decision at times when the dynamic equilibrium was upset or there was an intention to upset it. Most of the economists, including to some extent Heller, tend to think of tax stimulants to investment and the purchasing propensities related to increasing per capita disposable income as the elements of dynamism. From my experience here, I am sure that the role of new technology and its creation of what might be called the "forward look" among managers, added to the feeling that has come from the lunar exploration project that if NASA can go to the moon others can do their jobs faster and better, certainly has a bearing on the forward thrust of our economy and must affect the outlook to some large extent in our secondary and higher educational institutions. You may be interested in my letter of March 24 to Heller.

The enclosed extract of remarks by Dr. R. L. Bisplinghoff with respect to creating new technology indicates a possible framework of criteria for deciding those areas to which resources should be applied at a given time. I would be most interested in your views with respect to these remarks and also whether this question of criteria should be a part of the studies at George Washington University or might even become the subject of some university-wide type of study at Stanford. In many ways, this is one of the most important policy problems facing agencies like NASA and AEC, as well as the Department of Defense. Even if we could satisfy ourselves that we had a correct theory or doctrine in this regard and had proved it out with clinical-type experiments, we still would have the problem of gaining acceptance in the political decision-making forums. Nevertheless, a group on a university campus composed of all appropriate disciplines thoroughly knowledgeable in all aspects of this matter, including those related to political science, would be a great national asset and might play a critical role in the decision-making processes that could differentiate our civilization from those who have not survived in the past.

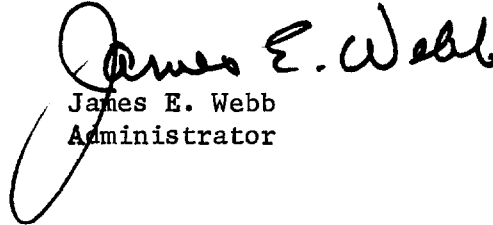
Dr. Joshua Lederberg

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I know the materials being sent are somewhat voluminous, and I apologize for this. However, I know of no easy way to communicate on these complex matters. Sometime when you are in Washington you might wish to meet with President Elliott and Vice President Mayo, along with others who are interested in these subjects.

With best wishes, believe me,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James E. Webb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name. It is positioned above the typed name and title.

James E. Webb
Administrator

Enclosures:

1. Memo of Understanding with George Washington University
2. Letter to Dr. Goldsen, Rand Corporation, 12/8/65;
Dr. Goldsen's reply 12/28/65
3. Letter to Dr. Alan Waterman 1/11/66; his reply
1/22/66 and subsequent letter 5/18/66
4. Letter from Dr. Walter Heller 3/8/66 enclosing speech;
Mr. Webb's reply 3/24/66
5. Extract of remarks by Dr. R. L. Bisplinghoff 12/9/64